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The Undoing of Job

A Comedy in Three Acts

By JOHN STONE

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The Undoing of Job

CHARACTERS

JOB, *hotel proprietor and retired butler, aged sixty-three.*

SEBASTIAN QUERY-BEACON, *a New Englander of the bluest blood, aged fifty.*

CHARLES PARKINS, *his stepson, aged twenty-four.*

LADY NORA BRADEFER, *an up-to-date aristocrat, aged twenty-four.*

MRS. QUERY-BEACON, *a tyrannous mother, with strong social instincts, aged forty-eight.*

MISS MERION, *an ambitious young woman, aged twenty-six.*

MAUD, *an undeveloped housemaid, aged eighteen.*

SCENE :—London. TIME :—The present.

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The Undoing of Job

ACT I

SCENE.—*The inner lobby of a small hotel in Half-Moon Street. It is somewhat plainly furnished and fitted up as a sitting-room. To the left is a writing-table and to the right a side door. At the back is a double door with draped curtains leading to the entrance hall of the hotel, beyond which may be seen a corner of the office desk over which* MISS MERION *presides. The inner lobby is semi-private; it could be made quite private by letting down the draped curtains. Voices may be heard in the outer lobby, as of guests arriving at the hotel; presently they cease. Trunks are brought through from the street.*

MISS MERION (*is heard in the outer lobby*). Mr. Job! Mr. Job! (*Coming in rather crossly.*) Where has he gone to now, I wonder? What a tiresome old man! Shan't I have to train him when —— (*Crosses to door at* R., *which she opens.*) Mr. Job! Ah, there you are!

(*She smiles at him pleasantly.*)

JOB (*entering*). Well, what is it? What is it?—Here I am. Do you want me?

MISS M. (*simpering*). Oh, Mr. Job! Do I want you? You mustn't ask me that.

JOB. Mustn't ask you that, my little cat,—eh? why not, —eh? (*Edges up to her.*)

MISS M. Oh, I should hardly know how to answer.

JOB. You wouldn't, wouldn't you?—Here, here, here, this is going a bit too fast. Now just you tell me, what is it?

MISS M. The Query-Beacons have arrived.

JOB. *Mr.* and *Mrs.* Query-Beacon, if you please. Have they?—Who showed them up?

MISS M. Maud.

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JOB (*shaking his head*). I hope that girl will do, but she lacks finish,—she lacks finish.

MISS M. I think she can be trained.

JOB. Did you tell her to take up hot water? Americans are terrible hard on the boilers. If more of them get to coming here I shall have to have a new one put in.

MISS M. Yes, Mr. Job, I told her. (MAUD *appears in the outer lobby.*) There's Maud now. I'll send her in. (MISS M. *goes out.*) Go in and see Mr. Job, Maud.

Enter MAUD.

JOB. Did you carry the bags up and show them their rooms?

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. Did you take in the hot water?

MAUD. Yes, sir,—that is,—I handed it in at the door.

JOB. Well, my girl, you must unlearn that trick.

MAUD. What trick?

JOB. Never hand the hot water in at the door,—unless, of course, the—circumstances indicate very clearly that you are not to go in. It is a housemaid's privilege always to go into bedrooms, and her professional duty never to see what is going on in them. That is a perfectly well understood social convention.

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. Did you unstrap the bags?

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. And the shawl-strap?

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. And did you hang up the coats?

MAUD. They said they preferred to do that themselves.

JOB. Well, that is because they are American, I suppose,—a little untutored, that's all. You should never encourage, even passively, people to do for themselves what servants can do for them. What are servants for?

MAUD. I'm sure I don't know, sir.

JOB. You don't know!—If people did things for themselves where would employment be?—Who would have any use for you, Maud, eh?

MAUD. Oh, really, sir, I'm very sorry. I won't do it again. I'm really very anxious to learn.

JOB. Well, well, some can learn, and some can't; it's in the blood or it isn't. Remember this, Maud, service is an art, and that art is the mainspring of civilization. Without service

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men would be savages, humanity would be reduced to drudgery, every man a scavenger, every woman a cook. It is service ennobles life, raises man above the brute, gives civilization its impetus. And what does it matter to us if this is sometimes forgotten?—if we who perform this great work are looked down on? Ah! I have been through the heartburning, the introspection, the revolt of youth, but I now perceive the glorious truth that service is its own reward if once you can perceive that it is an art. An ART, mind you, Maud!

MAUD (*bewildered*). Yes, sir.

JOB. An Art,—something that you do because you love doing it, and that you do therefore with taste, with discrimination, and with thoroughness. That's what you want to think of, my girl.

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. And don't take your standards and your ideas from the people you serve; they know little enough about it,—especially Americans.

MAUD. That's true.

JOB. You begin to see, I think?

MAUD. Yes, sir.

JOB. Well, you're a good girl; run along with you. (MAUD *turns to go; just as she reaches the door*—) Here, come here. Your cap isn't on straight. Heuh! a housemaid with a crooked cap,—it looks like Bayswater, or even Paddington. (*He fixes her cap.*) Now, stand up straight. (*Scrutinizes her.*) All right, now—and remember what I said about the shawl-strap—and—here—don't you forget about taking in the hot water next time. (*Exit* MAUD.) Dear, dear, these young women haven't got it in them like their grandmothers. Ah me! —I sometimes wish myself back in the old days at Powderham Place under the third Marquess,—that was living. Now, I am making money, but—and these Americans!

MISS M. (*entering*). Mrs. Query-Beacon wishes to speak to you,—she's in the hall; shall I show her in?

JOB. Yes, yes, show her in.

MISS M. (*impertinently, but in a low voice*). Can I trust you in a tête-à-tête?

JOB. You impertinent hussy, you, show her in at once.

(MISS M. *gives him her most brilliant smile, then turns back to the lobby and ushers in* MRS. QUERY-BEACON. JOB *holds back the curtains for her to enter.*)

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MRS. QUERY-BEACON. How do you do, Mr. Job? Very glad to see you again. You see, I couldn't stay away from London long.

JOB. Hope you had a good journey, ma'am.

MRS. Q. B. Very good, thank you.

JOB. Quite a surprise your coming over again this year, ma'am.

MRS. Q. B. Well, we've come over this time not for pleasure, but for business, very unpleasant business, too.

JOB. Very sorry to hear that, ma'am.

MRS. Q. B. Yes, most unpleasant.—Mr. Job, I know from experience how discreet and how obliging you are. I am going to tell you why I am in London, and I am going to ask you to do me a service. (JOB *bows.*) The fact is that Mr. Query-Beacon and I are here on a somewhat delicate errand. I am speaking to you confidentially, of course, Mr. Job.

JOB. Certainly, ma'am, certainly.

MRS. Q. B. I have a son by my first husband, Mr. Charles Parkins,—that is the name of my son.

JOB. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. Q. B. And he is here in London,—he is staying at the Cecil,—and we can't persuade him to come home.

JOB (*sympathetically*). Really, ma'am?—Well, of course, I can't say that the Cecil is an uncomfortable house,—but ——

MRS. Q. B. Oh, it isn't that. How absurd! He won't come home because he has become infatuated with—a theatrical person.

JOB. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!—they all seem to do just the same thing.

MRS. Q. B. It's terrible, Mr. Job, this footlight fever that seizes on so many of our young men nowadays and draws them on to dissipation, and drink, and ruin.

JOB. It is truly that, ma'am.

MRS. Q. B. It's worse than typhoid or appendicitis.

JOB. Certainly, ma'am, certainly.

MRS. Q. B. And I believe it is just as bad with you on this side as it is with us. We in America are going to form a league to combat this evil by means of publicity and courses of lectures.

JOB. By—lectures?—Indeed, ma'am?

MRS. Q. B. Yes, stereopticon lectures.

JOB. Well, ma'am, I have always heard it said that the Americans were very ingenious with machinery. Is it true, if

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I might make so bold as to ask, that they serve meals on automatic dumb-waiters instead of by footmen, as I've heard tell?

MRS. Q. B. Oh, no, Mr. Job, how absurd!—But I see that you sympathize with us, and so I hope that you will help us to make the inquiries that are necessary. I must take you a little further into my confidence. It appears that my poor, misguided boy wants to marry this woman.

JOB. Oh! that's very wrong, ma'am, very wrong. Perhaps the young gentleman is not in his right senses. A gentleman may without derogation—hem—what shall I say?—have discreet relations with an actress,—but to marry her! That is to lose sight of what he owes to himself, and of what he owes to his family, ma'am.

MRS. Q. B. It's a terrible situation for us.

JOB. He can take account of what he owes himself and of what he owes her without marrying her, ma'am. Quite unnecessary.

MRS. Q. B. It is certainly out of the question in this case. There has been no marriage of this kind in our family for generations.

JOB (*quite cheered at this announcement and visibly more deferential*). Indeed, ma'am, is that so?

MRS. Q. B. (*with great dignity*). Is that so?—Well —— However, I must not expect you to know that our New England families pride themselves on genealogies quite as perfect,—in fact generally more perfect than,—those of the old country. (JOB *bows deferentially.*) At all events, Mr. Job, what I want is this,—will you help me in my inquiries? At all costs this marriage must be stopped, and the first thing of all is to find out the woman's name and address.

MAUD. (*comes in and announces*). Mr. Query-Beacon.

QUERY-BEACON. Ah! here you are, my dear. How do you do, Mr. Job?

(JOB *bows;* Q. B. *advances on him intent on shaking hands.* JOB *retreats, bowing; finally* Q. B. *gives up the attempt.*)

MRS. Q. B. (*frowning at* Q. B.). Yes, I am here, arranging with Mr. Job, (*pointedly*) who is our landlord, to get information about the young woman ——

Q. B. Oh, yes, yes, to be sure. Have you told ——

MRS. Q. B. Yes, I have told Mr. Job, whom I feel we can trust, all about this miserable affair.

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Q. B. (*deprecatingly*). Oh! miserable —— Why assume ——

MRS. Q. B. Yes, miserable. And Mr. Job agrees with me that the notion of this woman being married by Charles is utterly preposterous. Don't you, Mr. Job?

JOB. Yes, ma'am, I do. In all my career in the service of the aristocracy of this country, and even since (*with a note of regret*) as a hotel keeper in the service, so to speak, of the (*getting melancholy*) gentry, I have never yet met a self-respecting person to approve of a mésalliance. (*He pronounces this meesâyliance.*) It is for me to marry in my class, and for your son to marry in his, and for actresses and such persons (*with great contempt*) to marry or to do as they like in theirs. We must all preserve our self-respect in the station in which God has placed us.

Q. B. Well, I call that a beautifully British speech.

MRS. Q. B. Sebastian!

Q. B. Yes, my dear, I know, I know; and I dare say that you will have your own way. Charles is your son, not mine. But allow me, if only at rare intervals, to air my sentiments as an American citizen. (JOB *perceptibly sniffs at the word citizen, while* MRS. Q. B. *puts on an air of dignified reproach.*) In the first place I don't believe in what you call a mésalliance in the least bit.

(JOB *assumes an expression of impenetrable reserve.*)

MRS. Q. B. Sebastian! I never expected to hear a Query-Beacon, my husband least of all, express himself in this way.

Q. B. It is just because I am a Query-Beacon that I assume the privilege of saying what I think; other families don't. We are played out as a race just because we have never contracted mésalliances. We have never ventured matrimonially beyond our fourth cousins three times removed, and the result is bad, very bad.—Don't you see it is, Mr. Job?

JOB. Oh, sir!—Excuse me, sir!

MRS. Q. B. You talk ridiculously. I myself am your second cousin once removed,—do you mean to reproach me with it?

(JOB *edges toward the door.*)

Q. B. Certainly not, Euterpe; you couldn't help it after all. You were not in a position to control the action of my

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great-grandparents on my mother's side. In any case, I was generalizing, not particularizing.

MRS. Q. B. Well, I want to particularize. We've got to get Charles out of this mess.

Q. B. What *mess*, my dear?

MRS. Q. B. (*looks daggers at him*). If you prefer to call it an entanglement ——

Q. B. Well, as I've so often said before, if I were you I should have a look at what you describe as a mess before you condemn it.

MRS. Q. B. I think you are perfectly unbearable,—and before him too,—Mr. Job.

JOB (*very discreetly*). Yes, ma'am.

MRS. Q. B. I must find out all about this woman.

Q. B. I dare say she'll turn out very charming, in every way an eligible bride for Charles. Perhaps she will be the starting point of a new and more robust race of Parkins?

JOB (*reproachfully*). Oh! sir, believe me,—if I may venture to interpose a word,—what madam says is very right. A mésalliance is a terrible blot in a good family. The young gentleman should be restrained from committing such an act of folly.

MRS. Q. B. Well, then, Mr. Job, will you help me? What can you suggest?

JOB. Well, ma'am, a great friend of mine is employed at the Hotel Cecil. If you wish, I could ask him for information.

MRS. Q. B. That would be splendid.—Could you see him this morning?

Enter MAUD.

MAUD. A note by boy messenger, for Mrs. Query-Beacon.

(*Hands her the note, and exit.*)

MRS. Q. B. It's from Charles,—in answer to the letter I posted from Liverpool.

(*She opens it and reads to herself; as she does so,* Q. B. *takes* JOB *to one side.*)

Q. B. Of course, you understand that this is Mrs. Query-Beacon's business, not mine. What she says about our family and all the rest is doubtless true, but I am a good enough American to believe in liberty even in marriage. I almost

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wish (*sighing*) we had more of it. Liberty in marriage may work badly here and there, but it's natural, and must be right in the long run. The Query-Beacons and the Parkins want renovating, my friend; they want a little democratic blood.

JOB. Oh! don't say that, sir.

MRS. Q. B. (*agitated*). Listen to this, Sebastian. (*Reads.*) "My dear Mother:—I write this hastily and in a fever. What a surprise to have you here in London so unexpectedly. I shall be with you soon after you receive this note. Of course, I guess why you have come. It is doubtless because you have heard scandalous and false reports about me and a certain lady. But I am easy on that score, for I am certain that if you could see Nora you would fall down and worship her just as I do. But can you see her?" (I should think not, indeed!) "That is the maddening question; that is why I am in a fever this moment; that is why I shall be with you in half an hour. Nora left her dear little flat in Chelsea this morning, and has vanished into thin air. I am nearly distracted with anxiety. The run of the 'Jaunty Gadfly'"—(The "Jaunty Gadfly,"—did you ever hear anything so crazy?) "is finished and they seem to know nothing at the theatre. She has written me six lines to say that it is all over; that she will not marry me; that she is wedded to her art, and cannot sacrifice it, or sacrifice me. Sacrifice me, indeed!—Isn't it ridiculous, mother? It's just like her sweet, impossible self, but of course, it's all moonshine, and you, dear mother, will help me find her"—(Heavens! Mr. Job, you need not think of starting for the Cecil!) "and,—but I'll tell you all about her soon. Till then I am your very distressed but affectionate son, Charles Parkins."

(MRS. Q. B. *sits down with a gasp, and holds her hand to her heart. She appears as though she might presently faint.*)

Q. B. (*flustered, seizes a newspaper and fans her*). There, there, my love, I'm sure it's a very dutiful, a very nice letter. Charles is a good boy.

JOB (*who has hurried out, and now returns with a glass of sherry and a biscuit*). Perhaps a glass of wine, ma'am?

MRS. Q. B. (*reviving*). Certainly not; I never touch alcohol. I belong to a society —— I think I will go to my room. Sebastian, will you help me? My son will be here presently

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and I suppose that I had better see him before anything else is done. But he is sure to be obstinate.

Q. B. Oh! the whole family is!

MRS. Q. B. Mr. Job, will you have him shown up-stairs the instant he comes?

JOB. Yes, ma'am; certainly, ma'am. (*Exeunt* MR. *and* MRS. Q. B. JOB *shakes his head.*) Well, I can understand her,—though I'm not saying that I think her much class,—she isn't that,—but she has, in her own way, some right enough ideas. But as for him! He's a regular anarchist, that's what he is! (*The hotel door slams;* NORA *appears in the lobby and can be distantly heard conversing with* MISS M. JOB *continues.*) Well, let them attend to their business, and I'll attend to mine. I wish just the same that Americans and hotels didn't seem to belong to one another quite as much as they do. Now in the old days you never had to have what I might call social intercourse with Americans ——

Enter MISS M. *and* NORA *in conversation.*

MISS M. I am sure we have no room, madam, but as Mr. Job is here ——

NORA. Mr. Job? Is that the name of the proprietor? (MISS M. *leaves them.*) Mr. Job —— Why, it's Joby! Dear old Joby!

JOB (*overcome with emotion*). Yes, ma'am, yes, milady;—it's Lady Nora, it must be. Yes, I'm old Joby, still your ladyship's very faithful old servant.

NORA. Oh! Joby, this is delightful, to see you again after so many years. And you remember me, too?—in short frocks;—and how Lord Alfred and I used to tease you?

JOB. Remember it, milady? (*With tears in his eyes.*) I should think so.

NORA. And the way we made the footmen laugh whenever grandmamma came to lunch?

JOB. Shall I ever forget it?

NORA. But we never could make you laugh, Joby.

JOB. No, milady, never. I venture to think that ——

NORA. You had some awfully close shaves, though.

JOB. Oh, no, milady, I think not.

NORA. Yes, yes, you had. (*Contritely.*) I'm afraid that we were sometimes rather unkind, weren't we?

JOB (*stoutly*). Oh! never, milady, never. I was honored that you thought you could deal with me so familiarly. I ven-

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ture to think, milady, that you knew that whatever you did to me I should never fail to keep my place. You honored me with your confidence, milady, and I always did keep my place.

NORA (*laughing*). Dear old Joby, it's like old times seeing you. We might almost be back at Powderham Hall.

JOB. I am just as much at your orders now as I was when the late Marquess was my master, milady.

NORA. Oh! no, that's absurd. The world changes, and we do too.—My short frocks are gone, and I don't want to tease you now, Joby. On the contrary I want to talk business. What are you doing here?

JOB (*with proud humility*). I am the proprietor.

NORA (*clapping her hands*). Oh! how lovely, Joby!—*Mr.* Job.

JOB. For you, milady, Joby,—it reminds me of the best days of my life.

NORA. Oh! no, not the best, surely? Why here you are affluent, independent ——

JOB. Peuh! What is it all? Vanity! Vanity! I had all the affluence that was good for me at Powderham Hall, and as to liberty ——

NORA. Why, Job, you don't mean to say that you don't value your independent position?

JOB. "Independent!" Yes, that's the beautiful label, and it's much like those for French wine that they print in the Tottenham Court Road. It's a beautifully untrue one it is. I have twenty masters now instead of one; and such masters, too!—the tradesmen, the guests, the servants, the accounts, heaven knows what, and heaven knows how they worry, nag, browbeat, bully and weary me. Before, I had one master, God bless him, who knew what was due to himself and to me! Ah! milady, I would go back gladly to-morrow if I could.

NORA. This is very shocking, Joby. Do you know, I think I can guess what's the matter,—are you married?

JOB. No, milady.

NORA. Well, the trouble is that you are too independent. You need a wife. Men are not strong enough to face the worries of life, the wear and tear.

JOB. There's nobody to marry.

NORA. Nobody?

JOB. Nobody in my station. Of course, if I condescended to look among my employees ——

NORA. Oh! Joby, you are too funny; you will kill me!

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Do you know what they would call you at my club? But no, I won't tell you.

JOB. Club? Club! Well, milady, you may laugh at me, but as I have had the privilege of serving your family many years, my only wish now is to serve you.

NORA. You're a good old soul, Joby, and you shall serve me.

JOB (*brightly*). Yes, milady.

NORA. First of all, drop *milady*, and call me *miss*.

JOB. Miss?—Miss?

NORA. Yes, miss,—Miss Nora Powderham. (JOB *is profoundly distressed.*) Job, you old silly,—don't you see, when father died and my brother came into the property, and everything went to pieces ——

JOB. Ah! milady, I did hope he would pull through. Oh! the turf! the turf! Do you remember the day *Jubilation* was beaten for the Cambridgeshire?

NORA. Yes, that was the beginning of the end.

JOB. The household was well-nigh ruined.

NORA. It was a dreadful time. And when old Powderham and the Abbey had to go!—But now, Joby, don't you see we girls couldn't live forever with my Aunt Alicia. So after Lady Violet was married I decided to strike out for myself.

JOB (*dubiously*). To strike out for yourself?

NORA. Yes, to earn my own living. (JOB *protests in dumb show.*) Oh! well, every one does it nowadays. Feudalism is all dead and buried, Joby,—all except you. (*She laughs.*)

JOB. What would the old Marquess have said?

NORA (*still laughing*). Joby, I positively don't dare tell you *how* I am earning my living. I believe you might have a fit, or—do something eccentric. I shall have to tell you later.

JOB (*with severe dignity*). Perhaps I ought to be told, milady?

NORA. No, we'll save it up. But I'll tell you what I want now, Joby. I have had to give up the furnished flat I was occupying in Chelsea somewhat suddenly ——

JOB (*suspiciously*). Suddenly?

NORA (*impatiently*). Yes, suddenly. Oh! drains wrong, or something of that sort,—now don't interrupt me, Job. And I want some quiet rooms,—with a discreet landlord who will always know how to say not at home to the right people and at the right moment. (*The hotel door slams.* PARKINS *is seen entering the outer lobby; he interviews* MISS M. *at the*

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desk. NORA *continues.*) I want a bedroom, a bath room, a sitting-room, meals served up-stairs, good attendance, Joby, and a latch-key.

JOB. A latch-key!

Enter MISS M.

MISS M. Excuse me, Mr. Job, am I to send Mr. Parkins up-stairs?

NORA. Mr. Parkins!

PARKINS (*outside*). What voice is that? (*Enters.*) Nora! My darling!

NORA. Oh, Charles! How did you find me here?

JOB. Gracious! Goodness!

PARK. Fortune is with me. I shall not leave you now. Be kind to me.

NORA. No, heavens! Never! Job, fetch me a hansom, quick. Charles, I forbid you. No! Don't! Leave me!

PARK. No, a piece of luck like this will never recur. Nora, Nora, I adore you, I can't let you go again.

NORA. Leave me, let me go. I swear if you don't I shall never forgive you. (PARK. *releases her hand.*) Joby, why don't you call my hansom?—Charles, don't follow me. If you'll wait here perhaps I will write to you. No, no, good-bye. [*Exit.*

JOB. What would my old master have said?

CURTAIN

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ACT II

SCENE.—*The same, half an hour later.*

(JOB *is at his desk working out accounts. He sighs occasionally, and appears worried; then speaks.*)

JOB. My mind won't work straight to-day. I get half way through a column of figures, and then, pop, before I know it, I find I'm thinking of old Powderham,—dear old Powderham. Ah—the third Marquess,—he was a wonderful man! He never wanted things changed. Material improvement is moral loss, he would always say, and I'm thinking now, although I never understood it then, that that was a very wise saying. He was satisfied to live as his father had lived before him, to enjoy his pleasures and to perform his duties. He never wanted to *get on* in the world, or to change things,—or to employ machinery —— Ah—bah—let me get this account of Smith & Smith straight. (*Resumes his work.*)

Enter MISS M.

MISS M. A note,—there is no answer.

(*Hands him the letter.*)

JOB (*with sternly repressed ferocity*). Damn letters!

(*He slams the letter down on the table and goes on with his work.*)

MISS M. I am so sorry to worry you with it, Mr. Job. (JOB *business of impatience.*) Couldn't I attend to it for you, perhaps? (JOB *business.*) You know I haven't half enough to do in the office. I wish you would let me take a few things off your shoulders. (JOB *still takes no notice, and* MISS M. *steals back somewhat crestfallen; aside.*) On the whole perhaps this is not a good moment. [*Exit.*

JOB. Perhaps I had better look at it. (*Sniffs at the letter.*) Hum! (*Opens it.*) Oh! (*Reads.*) "Dear old Joby ——" (Old Joby! indeed!—Heuh!) "Dear old Joby; I am so

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sorry for the little scene we've just had at your very nice hotel, which I like awfully much. I want your help now more than ever. You see, Mr. Parkins is very much attached to me, and I—well, I rather like him, too." (Oh, dear! this is dreadful, shocking!) "But I will not marry him, although unless I can keep out of his sight I am not at all sure that he will not marry me. I won't marry him because,—now you dear, funny, old Joby, don't be shocked,—because I'm an actress"—(JOB *drops the letter in despair.*) Good God! I felt it coming! (*He picks up the letter and goes on resignedly*)—"and I think it's often a mistake for young men who are not on the stage to marry young women who are,—and besides that I want to devote all my time, all my talent, all my ambition, to it. So I will not marry him. So will you please see him and tell him that it's no good, not the least little bit, to make a fuss and try to make me go back on my decision." (That I certainly will do, and with pleasure.) "Try to persuade him to leave me alone. I am writing this from a friend's house over in Curzon Street, and as I want to know the result, I shall call in and see you about five. You will, of course, take precautions that I don't meet Mr. Parkins again. If that is likely, send me a note not to come. Please do all this just as I ask you to show that you have not forgotten how to serve your little Lady Nora." She always was a wicked child. And how she used to tease! —Lord!—Always had her way, too.—An actress—great heaven! What would the old Marquess have said?—Well, at all events, I will see that the young man gets that message. (*He goes to door and calls out.*) Miss Merion!

Enter MISS M.

MISS M. Yes, Mr. Job.

JOB. Is Mr. Parkins still up-stairs?

MISS M. Yes, Mr. Job. Poor young man!

JOB. Let me give you just one word of advice. Don't talk so much. Talking spoils the beauty of women.

MISS M. But not of men. Oh, Mr. Job, I promise I won't.—I'm sorry.

JOB. When he comes down I want to see him.

MISS M. I hear him now.—I'll send him in. (*Runs to the door.*) Won't you come in here just a minute, sir?

Enter PARK.

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PARK. Certainly.

JOB. If you please, sir, might I speak to you just one moment? [*Exit* MISS M.

PARK. Yes. What is it?

JOB. The fact is,—I hope you will not think this an intrusion, sir,—I have received a letter from the young lady who was here a little while ago.

PARK. Let me see it.

JOB. Oh! no, sir—excuse me, sir,—private letter, sir,—I have to ask you, sir, whether you will refrain from pursuing that young lady with your attentions?

PARK. Never, never, I swear it. Not my mother, not you, not Nora herself, can make me give her up.

JOB. Well, sir, if I am not presumptuous, may I put it to you as a matter of personal dignity,—she says she doesn't want to marry you, so that she can devote herself to her art.

PARK. Oh, pooh! all that's argument.

JOB. Excuse me, sir, not at all, sir. An art is more exacting than you are probably aware, sir; it makes great demands, and although, of course, every one would not consider stage acting an art, yet I have heard many respectable looking people call it that.

PARK. I don't care, art or argument, it's all the same to me. You put it one way, mother puts it the other.

JOB. Puts it the other way?

PARK. Yes, says she is an intriguing actress trying to entangle me.

JOB (*trembling with fury*). Sir, sir —— Do you realize what you are saying?—Lady—the old Marquess —— No, no —— Heaven help me!

PARK. Of course it's all bosh. Nothing of the sort. Nora is all right.

JOB. Nora is all right!

PARK. She's the only girl in the world for me, and she's going to be mine, too.

JOB. You must give up all thought of this marriage, sir; it's an unsuitable one,—quite impossible.

PARK. Because Nora is what you call an "intriguing actress"?

JOB. No! Damnation! Oh! I beg pardon, sir, I'm sure. You see, sir, I've been rather overworked this morning,—trouble with my employees, sir. But to come back to the question, it's because the young lady doesn't want you, and because,

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sir, she (*with much dignity*) belongs to a different rank of society.

PARK. Damn ranks of society! I don't care about that.

JOB. Well, sir, without referring to the—extraordinary remark you have just made, I am bound, with all due respect, to tell you that when people belong to the rank of society to which this young lady does, the rank matters a great deal; in fact, sir, to put the truth in the very plainest possible way to you, sir, it will make all her friends hope that she will not misdemean herself by marrying you.

PARK. Misdemean?—Oh! shoot!

JOB. Excuse me?

PARK. Shoot! Oh! shoot!

JOB. I have often had the honor of carrying guns for gentlemen, sir, but I have never shot.

PARK. Oh, here, let me get out; you're an old lunatic. [*Exit.*

JOB. Well! What would the —— And I haven't done what Lady Nora wanted after all!—It all comes from people not staying in their proper places. What is old England coming to?—Lady Nora going on like this —— Oh! I'm too agitated—I don't know what will happen next. Some one coming?—(*Peeping out of the door.*) Mrs. Query-Beacon? Oh! I don't want to have her on my hands, too. My nerves are too shaken. [*Exit hurriedly.*

MRS. Q. B. (*in lobby, to* MISS M.). Yes, Mr. Query-Beacon will be down in a minute. We are going out to do some shopping. (*Enters with* MISS M.) I will wait for him here. (*Sitting down.*) Did you notice Mr. Parkins when he went out a minute ago?

MISS M. Yes, ma'am. Poor young man!

MRS. Q. B. How did he look? Tell me. Was he agitated?

MISS M. He looked very sad.

MRS. Q. B. Did he, poor boy? What did he do? Did he go straight out? Did he speak to you?

MISS M. He didn't speak, no, ma'am; he only looked at me.

MRS. Q. B. He looked at you?

MISS M. Yes, ma'am, and seemed as though he was trying to smile, but found it very hard work.

MRS. Q. B. (*hastily*). Oh, very well; that will do. (MISS M. *turns to go.*) Oh, tell me, before you leave, the address of a good cabinet-maker.

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MISS M. I don't know one, but I'll ask Mr. Job.

MRS. Q. B. Very well, thank you. (*Exit* MISS M., *by the side door.*) Let me see, what is it we have to do?

(*Pulls out a note-book and begins working over it.*)

NORA (*who has entered the lobby just before this*). What, no one here? I think I may as well go in and wait. (*Pokes her head in at the door.*) Hello! (*Tiptoes in.*) Ahem!

(*Rustles into a chair.*)

MRS. Q. B. (*looks up as* NORA *enters, and then plunges into her note-book again. A pause. Then she looks up again, and after inspecting* NORA *somewhat critically*). I wonder whether you could tell me the address of a shop to which I've been recommended, and of which I can only remember the name, Patcher and Curler?

NORA. What, Patcher & Curler, hair goods?

MRS. Q. B. Yes.

NORA (*cheerfully*). Oh! yes, of course I can. They are perfect dears. I get all my wigs there,—Nelson Square, just at the corner of Conduit Street.

MRS. Q. B. Your wigs!

NORA. Yes, my wigs. (*Enjoying* MRS. Q. B.'s *shock.*) I'm sorry I haven't one on now to show you. You see, I'm an actress.

(*She watches mischievously the effect of this announcement.*)

MRS. Q. B. (*severely*). Indeed?

NORA. Your best way to get there ——

MRS. Q. B. Oh, pray don't trouble. I think that perhaps it is not, after all, the kind of shop I should care to patronize if ——

NORA (*airily*). Perhaps not; it's the smartest in London.

MRS. Q. B. From the point of view of theatrical people, I suppose.

NORA. Who are extremely good judges of false hair.

MRS. Q. B. (*suddenly seized with an idea*). Perhaps she could tell —— (*Her manner changes.*) If you are an actress, I wonder whether you know anything of a woman named Nora Powderham?

NORA (*getting up*). Nora?—Nora Powderham? (*Mischievously.*) Oh, yes, I am—acquainted with her—(*rapidly*) in fact, I know her intimately.

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MRS. Q. B. (*guardedly*). Do you indeed? What is she like? Would you mind telling me?

NORA. What is she *like*?—What *is* she like? Well (*shaking her head*) she's a pretty doubtful case.

MRS. Q. B. I thought so.

NORA (*shocked*). Oh! I didn't mean that;—only from the point of view of art.

MRS. Q. B. (*inquisitorially*). Perhaps she is what is known as a music hall artiste?

NORA (*interested in viewing herself*). Oh! not a bit; nothing so frivolous. She is serious, very serious. She has not as yet made any very notable success, but what she does she tries very hard to do artistically. It is possible that she will never make a great popular favorite, but she will always work with an artist's ideals.

MRS. Q. B. (*feeling the delicacy of this suggestion*). I suppose that she is—rather—common?

NORA. Do you? Is that a delicate way of suggesting that all actresses are common?

MRS. Q. B. Not at all, not at all. I have no wish to be personal. Pray excuse me if I seem rude. But I have strong reasons for wishing to know about the woman we are speaking of.

NORA. Have you? Strong reasons? (*Staring a little hard at* MRS. Q. B.) I am quite disposed to tell you all you want to know about—this woman,—but will you allow me to ask you first why it is you are so curious about her?

MRS. Q. B. I hardly know whether ——

NORA. Exchange is no robbery. You answer my question and I will answer yours.

MRS. Q. B. I am most anxious to meet her. Could it be arranged?

NORA. Yes, I believe I could arrange a meeting.

MRS. Q. B. Well, I'll tell you. I have a son,—an only son. He's a boy, just out of Harvard. And this woman has entangled him in her snares, has got from him a promise of marriage, has ——

NORA. That's not true. She has refused to marry him.

MRS. Q. B. I see that you are well posted. It is true that she has *said* that she would not; but that is only one of her wiles. She knows the boy is mad for her, and that is one of her ways of playing on his feelings.

NORA (*trying to keep calm*). Excuse me, I know Miss

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Nora Powderham; you don't. She is not playing on his feelings, she is trying to keep away from him in dead earnest.

MRS. Q. B. I should like to have it from her own lips.

NORA (*anger slowly getting the upper hand*). Would you? (*More coolly.*) I suppose that you would view it as a great misfortune if your son did marry—I mean if Nora could be persuaded to accept your son?

MRS. Q. B. A misfortune? For my son to marry an actress a misfortune? It would be a catastrophe! It would be the most terrible calamity that has overtaken the family since it was driven from England by that infamous supporter of actresses, Charles II.

NORA. Would it, indeed?

MRS. Q. B. It would be a bitter humiliation, and I shall not suffer it. I will expose the woman. I will employ private detectives. I shall cable to Pinkerton. I will have Charles put on board a private yacht and sent around the world. And if she doesn't do as I wish her ——

NORA (*icily*). Wouldn't you prefer to see this woman first? I promised to get you an interview,—you may have it now,—immediately. (*She rises.*)

MRS. Q. B. Now?

NORA. I am Nora Powderham. Pray, what have you to say to me?

MRS. Q. B. You? you? I think I have said enough.

NORA. Yes, I think you have. Now let me tell you something. I wrote to your son yesterday to say that I would not marry him, and I meant it. But to-day,—I,—yes, I have changed my mind,—(*laughing*) I think he wants protection, poor boy, and if he will ask me to marry him, I think I shall be persuaded to consent after all.

MRS. Q. B. (*raging*). What insolence!

NORA. Oh! my dear lady, how little you know about the world, and about the human heart, and about actresses, and about what is common and what is not, and (*laughing*) I dare say about a great many other things.

MRS. Q. B. Oh, the impertinence! (*Enter* JOB.) This is too much.—I shall know what to do. I shall act at once.

(*Flings out of the room.*)

NORA (*exploding with laughter*). Run and cable to Pinkerton while I write two lines to Charlie. Oh, Joby, I've done it!

JOB. Oh! milady, not in mischief again? Oh, no! I

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don't mean that. I can't help thinking that your ladyship is still in short frocks.

NORA. That's just what I've done,—behaved as though I were still in short frocks.

JOB. With Mrs. Query-Beacon?

NORA. Mrs. who?

JOB. Query-Beacon.

NORA. Isn't Parkins the name?

JOB. Used to be Parkins, milady, Query-Beacon now,—second husband,—married again last winter.

NORA. Oh! yes, of course, how stupid of me!

JOB. I hope, milady, there has been no trouble?

NORA (*laughing*). There has been a fine old rumpus. Yes, she found out who I am, or rather she found out that woman, music hall artiste, or something of that sort, Miss Nora Powderham,—ha, ha, ha!—and then she told me flatly that I should not marry her son. And you'll never guess what I said to her?

JOB. No, milady.

NORA. Prepare yourself, Joby; you're going to be more profoundly shocked than ever!

JOB. Oh, no! milady, I can't believe that.

NORA. Why I told her that although I had refused him, I was now inclined to change my mind, and thought on the whole I would marry him.

JOB (*gasps*). Oh, milady!

NORA. You should have seen her, Joby! I thought she would explode!

JOB. But, milady, you cannot possibly mean to marry Mr. Parkins!

NORA. Yes, I do, Joby; and he'll have me, too. He's really ever so much of a dear boy, and I treated him most unkindly when I threw him over. I take it all back.

JOB. But, milady, it's quite impossible. Look at the difference in rank. What would the old Marquess have said?

NORA. Given me his blessing, dear old dad.

JOB. If I may be so bold, I think not, your ladyship. The old Marquess was mighty particular about such things. No, milady, in all my career in the service of your father, and ever since as a hotel keeper in the service, so to speak, of the gentry, I have never yet known a self-respecting person approve of a mésalliance. It is for me to marry in my class, for you, milady, if I may say so, to marry in yours, and for actresses,—I mean

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for *Americans* and such like persons to marry in theirs. We must all maintain our self-respect.

NORA. Joby, do you know what the Americans and such like persons would call you? They would call you a back number.

JOB. Very likely, milady,—but one never takes notice of what Americans say.

NORA. I do, sometimes, Joby.

JOB. Oh! milady, let me beg you not to do this thing. I am an old servant of your family, and I speak from my heart. When I think of Powderham, and the long line of footmen, and the old armor in the hall, and the marble tombs in the chapel, of all the glories of the Bradefers, your ancestors, it breaks my old heart to think you could ——

NORA. Joby, you are very silly, and I won't discuss it further with you.

JOB. Marry an American!—an American *traveller!*

NORA. No, no. Listen to me, Joby. Will you do what I ask?—or won't you?

JOB. Your ladyship never remembers my disobeying orders, I venture to say.

NORA. Very well, then, I want you to arrange so as to get Mr. Parkins here. I want to see him,—that will be much easier than writing. Dear boy! (JOB *business.*) Come, Job, will you do as you are told?

JOB (*groans*). Yes, milady.

NORA. In about an hour's time?

JOB. Yes, milady.

NORA. And if he asks why, tell him,—good news.

JOB. Oh! yes, milady.

NORA (*going, turns back*). Oh, one thing more, Joby, dear Joby—(*teasingly*) give him my love. [*Exit, laughing.*

JOB (*remains broken up for a few moments*). Marry an American!—What would the old Marquess have said? She and Lord Alfred never did anything to equal this at old Powderham. Give him my love —— Oh!

Enter Q. B.

Q. B. Oh! have you seen Mrs. Query-Beacon? I thought perhaps she was down here having a chat with you.

JOB. A chat with me?—A chat with *me*, sir?

Q. B. Oh, yes. Why not? You know in America hotel

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keepers are among the most influential persons of the community, especially in politics.

JOB. Then, thank God, I am not an American.

Q. B. What's that you say?

JOB. Thank God, I'm not an American.

Q. B. Well, you're a queer sort of a back number, aren't you?

JOB. Am I? (*Very stiffly.*) I regret to have to inform you, sir, that I shall not be able to let you the rooms you are now occupying after to-morrow.

Q. B. Cannot let me the rooms? What is the meaning of this? Will you give me an explanation?

JOB. With all respect, sir, there is no explanation.

Q. B. Oh, I see! Very well. But I don't think you will find that it pays in the long run to treat Americans in this way. (*Turns to leave the room.*)

JOB. Oh, damn Americans, sir, with all respect, damn Americans!

CURTAIN

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ACT III

SCENE.—*The same, one hour later.*

(MISS M. *is discovered sitting at* JOB'S *desk, and evidently working at accounts.*)

MISS M. Yes, that's what it is,—they charged that item on the 9th of March and again on the 19th. That must be it.

(*She plunges into figures again.*)

Enter JOB. *He gazes at* MISS M. *in astonishment.*

JOB. Well! of all the impertinent young women!

MISS M. Oh! Mr. Job! how you frightened me!

JOB. What were you doing at my desk?

MISS M. You don't think that I was doing any harm?

JOB. What were you doing at my desk?

MISS M. (*wheedling*). You don't think that I was doing anything very wicked,—do you?

JOB. Answer my question,—and—don't you dare make eyes at me.

MISS M. (*changing her tone*). Why, Mr. Job, I knew that you had been bothered by that account of Smith & Smith, and—well—you know,—I *am* better at accounts than you are——

JOB. Are you, indeed?

MISS M. Oh! yes, indeed, I am.

JOB. Well, that's no reason for going to my desk.

MISS M. I'm very sorry, Mr. Job. I meant well.

JOB. I dare say—— (*Pause.*) Well——?

MISS M. I won't do it again, Mr. Job.

JOB. Is that all you have to say?

MISS M. I'm afraid I have offended you?

JOB. What was the result of your going to my desk?

MISS M. Only to make you angry with me. Please forgive me.

JOB. Hum—ha—— Well, why are you standing around there? (MISS M. *turns to go.*) Here. Come back. You

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understand perfectly well what I want to know. This account of Smith & Smith ——?

MISS M. Yes, Mr. Job.

JOB (*explosively*). Don't you keep saying, "Yes, Mr. Job," to me. You little minx, you. Do you suppose I don't know what you are after? I'm not in my dotage yet. I've seen the world.

MISS M. Perhaps we had better take this up later?

JOB. No, don't go. (*More calmly.*) Now, look here, Emily ——

MISS M. (*pertly*). I am afraid I can't allow you to call me Emily.

JOB. Oh, bother! I know. Come, tell me about that account. Did you find a mistake?

MISS M. (*changing tone*). Yes, I'll show it you. (*Takes the bill and goes over it with* JOB.) There, do you see that? Well, then, look here. Not the least doubt, it's a repeated item, and it exactly makes the difference in the figures when you check them.

JOB. So it does; that's right.

MISS M. I think that Smith & Smith want a lot of watching. (JOB *nods his head.*) And all their deliveries and items ought to be systematically tallied and checked.

JOB. Oh! yes, I know, I know. Anything else?

MISS M. Why not let me do it? You know a man can't run a house like this without a woman to help him.

JOB. Oh, you artful puss! This is a nice sort of thing you are leading me into! (*Pulling himself together and resuming his dignity.*) I think I hear some one in the entrance. I believe your proper post is in the hotel office, Miss Merion.

MISS M. So it is. I fly. (*Skips to the door.*) Oh! Mr. Parkins!

JOB. Mr. Parkins? I want to see him.

MISS M. I'll send him in.

[*Exit. She can be heard talking to* PARK. *outside.*

Enter PARK.

PARK. Oh! it's—the —— How do you do?

JOB (*stiffly*). May I take a few minutes of your time, sir? I am afraid I have another commission to execute, sir. Lady Nora Bradefer presents her compliments, and wishes to see you in this room, and in fact will be here (*pulling out his watch*) in about ten minutes.

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PARK. Lady Nora Bradefer?

JOB (*bitterly*). Ah, yes, of course, you only know her—her alibi name, so to speak, if I may use such a term in connection with her ladyship. I suppose I ought to have said Miss Nora Powderham.

PARK. Nora?—My Nora?

JOB. *Your* Nora! Was ever a self-respecting man tried so sorely?

PARK. What was that you called her a moment ago?—Lady Nora?

JOB. I had the honor, sir, to call her ladyship by her rightful name.

PARK. And that is ——?

JOB (*forcibly*). Lady Nora Bradefer, sir.

PARK. Lady Nora Brade —— What, my Nora is Lady Nora?—Lady Nora Bradefer?—I wonder if that is the reason why she won't marry me? I wonder ——

JOB (*clutching at this straw*). Well, sir, if you will permit me, I would like to say that that would appear to be a very good reason.

PARK. I see, that explains everything. I see it all now; of course that's it; Nora Powderham is a travesty, a stage name.

JOB. You may well say a travesty, sir.

PARK. The whole thing has been an amusement for her.

JOB. Perhaps for *her*, sir.

PARK. And I suppose that I have been part of the joke. Now she is getting tired of it and her aristocratic prejudice asserts itself.

JOB. Aristocratic prejudice, sir? Oh, it's only the lower classes have aristocratic prejudices.

PARK. (*debating with himself*). Why should she not have a feeling of this kind? It's perfectly natural; of course she was bound to feel the difference of rank. And what's more, I do too. Am I going to marry a woman between whom and myself there shall be any suggestion of inequality? No, sir, not for me. But, Nora, darling Nora ——

JOB (*diplomatic and more conciliatory*). You see, sir, it's this way. Lady Nora, sir, wishes, I am sure, to spare your feelings, because she asked me to mention the matter, so to speak, pleasantly. (*He mops his brow, aghast at his own duplicity.*) Of course, it was necessary that you should be made acquainted with her ladyship's name and rank; and although her ladyship has seen fit to assume an alibi name,—

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for reasons that my former employment in the service of her ladyship's father, the late Marquess of Biddenham, sir, forbid me to discuss,—I am sure, sir, that, as a man of the world, you perceive what a complete obstacle this is to—what had been proposed. We must all maintain our self-respect, sir, each in his own station.

PARK. Yes, yes, that's right, I suppose. It's the curse of your confounded English system!

JOB. Our confounded—our confoun —— Well, sir (*pityingly*), I suppose it is perhaps a little hard for you to understand.

Enter Q. B.

Q. B. Hello, Charles! Your mother is up-stairs and wants to see you. What's the matter? You seem depressed.

PARK. I am.

Q. B. What is it?

PARK. (*pointing to* JOB). Ask him.

JOB. Oh, excuse me, sir. (*Retreating rather shamefacedly from* Q. B.) I had rather not.

Q. B. I don't wish to have it from him.

JOB (*to* Q. B.). I am afraid, sir, that I was carried away in a very heated moment, and made use, sir (*gulps*), of some unseemly expressions. It is the only time in my life, sir, that such a thing has occurred, and I hope you will overlook it. I wish to express my apologies.

Q. B. Come, Charlie, tell me, what is it?

JOB. I apologize very humbly, sir.

Q. B. Very well, I accept your apology; you may go.

JOB (*brightening*). Oh, thank you, sir.

PARK. It's all up.

Q. B. What, you and the actress?

PARK. Yes.

Q. B. Why?

PARK. She won't have me,—and, by God, I won't have her.

Q. B. Well, there is just this to be said, that it'll please your mother. She says she believes in equal rights for women, but what she practices is maternal despotism. But tell me, what's the trouble?

PARK. It turns out that she is the daughter of a Marquess. She is Lady Nora Bradefer, and not Miss Nora Powderham, as I thought, so ——

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Q. B. Whew, I see!

PARK. She feels a certain difficulty about marrying a plain American, and, look here (*taking his hand*), although I love her more than life itself, I refuse to marry a woman if either she or I may feel that there is inequality between us.

Q. B. There, Charles, you're right. I disagree with your mother about this thing, and I think you might marry a chorus girl if only she would make you a good wife; but the daughter of a Marquess? No, never. I'm a republican, my boy. I'm all for the principles of Jefferson,—liberty, freedom, justice, and down with aristocracy.

PARK. Oh, you had better go and talk to the hotel keeper; you both belong to the nineteenth century.

Enter MRS. Q. B.

MRS. Q. B. Why didn't you come up sooner, Charles? I have been worrying as to where you had got to.

Q. B. You see, my dear, Charles and I have been discussing his little escapade, and I know you will be delighted to hear that he has made up his mind to give up the girl.

MRS. Q. B. Have you, Charles? Is it true?

PARK. (*gloomily*). Yes, it is true.

Q. B. (*viciously*). Because he has discovered that she is not a real actress, but the daughter of a Marquess, Lady Nora Bradefer, who has taken to the theatre for a living.

MRS. Q. B. (*gasping*). The daughter of a Marquess! What Marquess?

Q. B. The Marquess of Tweedledum. Good-bye. I'm going up-stairs to write some letters. [*Exit.*

MRS. Q. B. Charles?

PARK. Yes, mother.

MRS. Q. B. Are you very broken up about this thing?

(*She puts her hand on his shoulder.*)

PARK. Yes, mother, I am.

MRS. Q. B. Did you give her up on my account?

PARK. On your account? Why, of course not, mother. How ridiculous!

MRS. Q. B. Ridiculous! Indeed!—Well, why then? What is the reason?—What is all this I have just heard?—Is it true she is a lady?

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PARK. True she is a lady? Any one can see that. Yes, yes, it is all true.

MRS. Q. B. (*sitting down by him*). Come, Charles, dear, perhaps I've been a little harsh with you. But I can't bear to see you so cast down. Explain to me why it is a trouble that she should be a lady of rank.

PARK. Why because if she feels, as she does, that being the daughter of a Marquess makes a social difference between us, even if she would marry me I wouldn't marry her.

(*He groans and takes his head between his hands.*)

MRS. Q. B. Is she really Lady Nora Bradefer?

PARK. Yes, mother, yes,—bad luck to it!

MRS. Q. B. Charles, you are very unreasonable. First you want to marry a woman who, apparently, is merely an actress. Naturally, I object. For you to marry such a woman would be a family disgrace. But the instant it turns out that the woman is not an actress,—not in any real sense, of course, only pretending at being an actress,—but of good, very good social standing, then you say you won't marry her.

PARK. No, I won't.

MRS. Q. B. Of course, I am your mother, and want to see you happy. All a mother ever considers is the happiness of her children. Although opposed to this marriage, I would not stand in the way of your happiness. I have long realized that my part must be that of sacrifice. Now that it appears that this lady is of good family I *might*, if that seemed really essential to your welfare ——

PARK. Mother, I've done with happiness. I will start tomorrow around the world,—back to Boston by Calcutta. I will never see Nora again.

Enter NORA.

NORA. Never?

PARK. Nora!

NORA. Did you say never? Oh! what a horrid word!

MRS. Q. B. Charles, won't you introduce me?

PARK. Nora! Yes, I did say never.

NORA. It sounds so brutal,—never.

MRS. Q. B. (*plucking his coat*). Introduce me ——

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PARK. Oh, bother!—Nora, this is my mother, Mrs. Query-Beacon,—Miss Nora Powderham.

MRS. Q. B. You said Miss Nora Powderham.

PARK. Oh! Lady Nora,—of course,—(*very stiffly*) Lady Nora Bradefer—Mrs. Query-Beacon.

MRS. Q. B. Delighted, I am sure.

NORA. I think I have already had the pleasure.

MRS. Q. B. Oh, yes, to be sure,—I think we had a little talk about—the shops, didn't we? (*Aside to* NORA.) I hope you have forgotten all I said,—perhaps I was a little hasty.

PARK. Met before?

NORA. A little hasty?

MRS. Q. B. Yes, in what I said about my son, of course.

NORA. Do you mean, may I ask, when you said you would cable for detectives, ship him off on a yacht and all that sort of thing?

PARK. What's this you are saying?

MRS. Q. B. Oh, nothing, nothing.

PARK. Yes, it is. How did you meet before?

NORA. Quite accidentally, Charlie, a few minutes ago, and without knowing one another.

PARK. There's more in it than that.

MRS. Q. B. Oh, Charlie, I promise ——

NORA. Now, Charlie, don't be silly. We only talked about shops, didn't we, Mrs. Query-Bacon?

PARK. Nora,—I don't understand. Tell me, why have you come?

NORA. I'm not quite sure.

MRS. Q. B. Come, Lady Nora, you must forgive me. Try to put yourself in my situation.

PARK. After your message I did not expect to see you here.

MRS. Q. B. Poor boy! He's very upset.

NORA. It was because of something that happened that I sent word to Charles that I would marry him after all. But now, I don't feel very sure.

PARK. That you would marry me after all? But you *don't* want to marry me.

NORA (*impetuously*). Yes, I do, Charlie.—Oh —— Why did you say that?

PARK. The old lunatic of a hotel keeper told me that you didn't.

NORA. What? Old Joby? Didn't he give you my love? Say that I had good news for you, and wanted to see you?

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PARK. He never said a word of that. What he said was —— Oh, well, it was very different, quite the opposite, in fact.

NORA. I'll take his head off.

PARK. (*stiffening up for a moment*). I thought—he led me to suppose that the difference in rank between us made you feel ——

NORA. You silly boy,—how could you think that? Don't you know that I am as much of a democrat as you are? Isn't Love a staunch republican? Have you forgotten our old conversations at Chelsea?

MRS. Q. B. Charles, I think I shall join Mr. Query-Beacon up-stairs for a few moments, to ask his advice about you. You know that your mother has always tried to secure your happiness. I will leave you a few minutes. Be a good boy. Be kind to him, Lady Nora. [*Exit.*

PARK. Oh, Nora, Nora, I can't think of arguments, or conversations, or my mother, or anything else, when I see you there before me.

NORA. I was very foolish to write you that note yesterday, Charlie. Now you mustn't be foolish, too.

PARK. Only over you, Nora.

NORA. You dear boy,—yes, of course, only over me.

PARK. But why did Job tell me?

NORA. Job's a villain,—let's have him in. (*She goes to the door and calls out.*) Is Mr. Job about? I want to see him.

MISS M. I'll find him at once.

PARK. You know he told me that your having a title made you feel as though there were some insuperable barrier ——

NORA. The rascal! (*Enter* JOB.) Did you deliver my message to Mr. Parkins, Job?

JOB. Yes, milady. I—that is—he—I mean—I told him ——

NORA. Well, what did you tell him?

JOB. Why, I forget the exact words I used, milady, and as a matter of fact he did most of the talking.

NORA. Job, did you give him my love, and say that I wanted to see him?

JOB. Certainly not. Oh, milady, spare the feelings of an old man. After so many years in the service of the Marquess your father ——

NORA. You told him precisely the contrary of what I told you.

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JOB. No, oh, no, milady; it was the young gentleman himself, milady; he said he would not contract a mésalliance, milady, and naturally I could only approve such respectable sentiments, milady. We must all, in our own stations, maintain our self-respect.

PARK. I did say that if you thought that your rank made inequality between us, I also would refuse to marry under such circumstances.

NORA. Charles, how could you? Well, Joby, as we *are* going to be married I suppose I shall have to forgive you after all.

JOB. Milady, will you permit me to ask you one solemn question,—what do you think the old Marquess would have said?

PARK. Oh, shoot!

Enter MR. *and* MRS. Q. B.

Q. B. Well, Charles, is it all right now? (*Turning to* MRS. Q. B.) I see the young people have settled everything between them.

MRS. Q. B. (*to* PARK. *and* NORA). I think I may congratulate you and ourselves. I have had a long talk with Mr. Query-Beacon, and I am glad to tell you that I have brought him to a complete approval of the match. You see, Charles, a mother is always working for the happiness of her son.

(JOB *is standing at one side dejectedly; to him enter* MISS M.)

MISS M. I thought perhaps you might be a little tired, Mr. Job, so I have got you a sherry and egg out in the office.

JOB. What made you think of that? Emily, I think—no, —yes —— Well, when a lady of rank marries an American, —an American traveller—Emily, will you be my wife?

MISS M. Yes, Mr. Job,—thank you.

JOB. Well, at my age, it almost doesn't matter, although I suppose it is a very bad example. But let me tell you this, Miss Emily, that I never thought I would come to it.

MISS M. I did, though. (*Aside.*) Won't I pay him out for that remark!

JOB (*solemnly*). Come with me. (*Advances toward* NORA.) I, too, milady, am about to be married. Will you permit me to present my intended bride, Miss Merion?

NORA (*laughing*). What, you too, Job? And with one

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of your employees? Oh, shocking! shocking! Oughtn't we all to marry in our own stations?

JOB (*groans*). Oh, I know it, milady, I know it. What would the old Marquess have said?

NORA. Never mind; we'll send you a wedding present, won't we, Charlie?

PARK. Yes, and the sooner the better.

CURTAIN

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